

Oberlin

Digital Commons at Oberlin

Honors Papers

Student Work

1996

Crossed Wires, Noisy Signals: Language, Identity, and Resistance in Caribbean Literature

Barry Eidlin
Oberlin College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.oberlin.edu/honors>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Eidlin, Barry, "Crossed Wires, Noisy Signals: Language, Identity, and Resistance in Caribbean Literature" (1996). *Honors Papers*. 528.

<https://digitalcommons.oberlin.edu/honors/528>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at Digital Commons at Oberlin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Oberlin. For more information, please contact megan.mitchell@oberlin.edu.

Crossed Wires, Noisy Signals:
Language, Identity, and Resistance in
Caribbean Literature

by

Barry Eidlin

**A Senior Honors Thesis presented to the
Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies Program at Oberlin College
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors**

Advisor: Prof. Anthony Stocks

**Oberlin College
May 1996**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Side One—Original/Version..... | 2 |
| Prologue — Making Connections..... | 2 |
| 1—Caribbean Identity and the Problem of Location..... | 4 |
| 2—Collecting Fragments: The Caribbean Meta-Archipelago..... | 10 |
| 3—Le Retour et le Détour..... | 14 |
| 4—Noise in the Circuitry..... | 20 |
| 5—Syncretism and Mimicry: The Ghosts in the Machine..... | 26 |
| Side Two—The Remixes..... | 31 |
| DUB VERSION: Oppositional Codings of Language in Aimé Césaire’s <i>Cahier d’un retour au pays natal</i> | 31 |
| CLUB VERSION: Mimicry and Appropriation in Derek Walcott’s <i>Pantomime</i> | 44 |
| Coda—Living in the Void..... | 51 |
| NOTES..... | 54 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 59 |

Side One—Original/Version

“The mind that has conceived a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived.”

-Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Prologue — Making Connections

Hip Hop was my first exposure to Black cultural production. Growing up in a predominantly white, upper-middle class neighbourhood in south central Ontario, my exposure to the music was largely through MuchMusic, the Canadian version of MTV, and my white suburban schoolmates who were eating up the mass-market, commodified incarnations of hip hop music. My initial reaction was quite negative. These manifestoes from South Central L.A. and the South Bronx were completely alien to me, and I loathed them. I would ignorantly complain about their lack of instrumental talent, the flashy, materialist attitudes advanced in the lyrics, and other such perceived atrocities. Granted, some of my animosity was a result of the anti-commercialist ethic that permeates the punk rock youth subculture of which I was a part. However, for the most part, I just didn't get it. It was all noise to me.

Moreover, I was not alone. Dozens upon dozens of music critics spent inordinate amounts of time lambasting the lack of talent and originality in this new form of music called “rap.” Newsweek was compelled to write a story in their March 19th, 1990 issue about “The Rap Attitude,” which, they asserted, could be heard “in the thumping, clattering, scratching assault of rap.”¹ Another article in the same issue, entitled “Decoding Rap Music,” made an effort to “give the lowdown” on this new musical style, which, the authors assumed, its primarily white, middle-class audience perceived as “the

guys with the names you don't understand...chanting over gut-whomping drumbeats and those noises like someone scratching a needle across the damn record.”² For my part, I remember listening to one radio personality on a favourite station of mine go into painstaking detail in an attempt to go so far as to explain exactly why rap is in fact not music at all. Using numerous examples of popular tunes to demonstrate what exactly constitutes a “real” song, he exposed what he felt was the fundamental problem with rap music: the lack of a melodic “hook.”

While this lamented victory of cacophony over melody in hip-hop generated enough hostility on its own, both in myself and throughout the white-dominated music criticism establishment, it was hip-hop's production technologies that most irritated us. The reliance on computer technology in the form of sampling previously recorded material to produce new tracks further advanced the charge, made by increasing numbers of critics, that hip-hop in fact wasn't even music. Representative of this technologically-based argument is that put forward by Martha Bayles in her book *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music*:

With sampling, [the] element of musicianship gets lost. The computer permits any sound to be inserted, with the utmost precision, at any point, to create a thickly textured aural montage. And if it doesn't fit exactly, it can always be altered. The process requires skill, needless to say. But not always musical skill. And the result is not always judged by musical standards.³

Indeed, sampling technology allowed hip-hop producers to take syncretism to a new level that was previously unimaginable: As Prince Be Softly of P.M. Dawn has said: “my music is based in hip-hop, but I pull everything from dance-hall to country to rock

together. I can take a Led Zeppelin drum loop, put a Lou Donaldson horn on it, add a Joni Mitchell guitar, then get a Crosby Stills and Nash vocal riff.”⁴ With a sampler, this could all be done with the push of a few buttons.

Musical content aside, certain self-styled spokespersons for the American public fell over each other in attempts to criticize the music on a moral level. As B. Adler remarks:

[Rap] is reviled by hundreds in the [executive] suites....It is boycotted by both “rock” and “black” radio....It has been denounced by the Parents Music Resource Center and Focus on the Family....It has been condemned by the PTA.⁵

Add to this the Anti-Defamation League, as well as any politician interested in appearing to take a tough stance in support of “family values.” All of these groups narrowly took one form of rap, namely the “gangsta” style personified by outfits like N.W.A. and the Geto Boys, and made it represent the whole, decrying the obscenity and immorality of its blatantly violent and misogynist lyrical content. Taken to its furthest extreme, the Newsweek article suggested that rap music was the soundtrack to an ascendant “Culture of Attitude...marrying the arrogance of Donald Trump to the vulgarity of Roseanne Barr.”⁶ The end result of this plethora of critical posturings was to supply me with a limitless amount justifications for my narrow-minded rejection of hip-hop.

1—Caribbean Identity and the Problem of Location

I begin this work about Caribbean literature with an anecdote about my initial encounters with hip-hop culture because these episodes also mark my first encounters with the noises of diasporic African cultural production. These oppositional noises defy

strict national boundaries, but rather spread out across the globe, serving as a bridge linking together the myriad narratives of slavery, colonization, and resistance of oppressed peoples throughout the world. Take, for example, Leonard Barrett's writings on Rastafarian music, where he observes that anyone who listens to any type of it, "be it the ritual Nyabingi or the popular reggae, will detect in the lower beats deep structural dissonance which mirrors the social conflicts within the society."⁷ Listening to the "thumping, clattering, scratching assault" of rap, we can hear the same structural dissonances contained within the raw sound of the bass notes and the awesome sampled sound montages.

Developing this connection further, I might go so far as to suggest that to a certain extent, rap music and the culture surrounding it constitutes an incursion of the Caribbean archipelago into (North) American territory. Indeed, hip-hop as we know it today would have been impossible were it not for this incursion. At a very physical level, the very person generally credited with "inventing" rap music, Clive "DJ Kool Herc" Campbell, was himself a Jamaican transplant to the West Bronx, thus serving quite literally as a bridge between the U.S. and the Caribbean. Similarly, other early hip-hop pioneers shared strong Caribbean roots, including the Barbadian Afrika Bambaataa, founder of the Zulu Nation, and DJ Red Alert, among many. These people brought with them to the U.S. a working knowledge of the "sound system" culture of the Caribbean, particularly Jamaica, which they then creatively adapted to suit their new environment. Kool Herc's groundbreaking innovation of artfully cutting back and forth between short instrumental breaks in various songs to create a seamless, extremely danceable sound collage, which provided the founding basis for hip-hop, serves as a prime example of this process of

adaptation. Having set up his own mobile sound system in the Bronx, he began to cut up records in this way when he realized that his African-American crowds didn't respond to the reggae he had been playing. He would then "toast," or rap, over the breaks to egg on the crowd, emulating the "talk-overs" of Jamaican dub/reggae DJ's like U Roy and others. This feature of course paved the way for the rap MC, adding the final element to this new form of music.⁸

I use hip-hop as my example only because it is the one that is closest to my personal experience, but clearly this is far from the only example of the ways in which the culture of the Caribbean insinuates itself throughout the world. Furthermore, beginning in this way serves as an example of just how problematic it is to describe or delimit what, if anything, constitutes "Caribbean culture," or "Caribbean identity." What markers would we use: skin colour? geographical coordinates? common rituals? In an essay entitled "Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity," R. Radhakrishnan asserts that "the postcolonial search for identity in the Third World is beset primarily with the problem of location."⁹ Where then can we locate such a Caribbean identity? Indeed, because of its fragmented, dispersed character, trying to map out a politico-cultural geography of the Caribbean can be quite an elusive endeavour. As Eric Williams sums up,

The contemporary Caribbean is an area characterised by instability; political and economic fragmentation; constitutional diversity; economic, psychological, cultural and in some cases political dependence; large-scale unemployment and under-employment; economic uncertainty; unresolved racial tensions; potential

religious conflicts; the restlessness of youth; and an all-pervading fear of the United States.¹⁰

Moreover, in most cases this fragmentation and dependency has been consciously cultivated in the islands by the colonial powers in order to maintain dominance, to the point that Williams suggests that “the whole history of the Caribbean thus far can be viewed as a conspiracy to block the emergence of a Caribbean identity.”¹¹ So acute is this fragmentation today, dividing so many diverse and distinct cultures, each a product of the legacy of the unpredictable and oftentimes violent mixture of indigenous peoples, African slaves, Asian coolies, and European colonizers, that some critics would like to dispense entirely with the very notion of “the Caribbean” as a unified object of study. Take for example the historian Frank Moya Pons, who states quite simply that:

For the majority of the population of the area, to speak of the Caribbean has meaning only as a convenience in geography classes; for most of its people the Caribbean as a living community, with common interests and aspirations, just does not exist. Practically, it seems more sensible to think of several Caribbeans coexisting alongside one another. Although it is frequently said that the local economies follow a similar pattern, in fact the cultures and social structures of the region vary considerably, and consequently, lifestyles and political behavior vary as well.¹²

To be sure, my goal here is not to construct a totalizing framework within which we can conveniently fit an essentialized concept of “the Caribbean.” This is, after all, what white colonizers have done to the area since the time of Columbus. Armed with a sense of moral righteousness based within an Enlightenment rationalist thought

paradigm, these explorers, administrators, and entrepreneurs, have served their respective masters well, be they kings, presidents, or CEO's, in their attempts to name, to classify, to confine the world's territories within certain regulatory parameters, and thus to control them. I would suggest that this process is an integral part of the phenomenon that Foucault has called "the will to truth" in his "Discourse on Language":

Going back a little in time, to the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—and particularly in England—a will to knowledge emerged which, anticipating its present content, sketched out a schema of possible, observable, measurable and classifiable objects; a will to knowledge which imposed upon the knowing subject—in some ways taking precedence over all experience—a certain position, a certain viewpoint, and a certain function (look rather than read, verify rather than comment), a will to knowledge which prescribed (and, more generally speaking, all instruments determined) the technological level at which knowledge could be employed in order to be verifiable and useful (navigation, mining, pharmacopoeia).¹³

In the Caribbean, knowledge has been employed in quite verifiable and useful ways, particularly ways of generating extreme wealth for the colonial metropole. Knowledge has been employed to create the Spanish fleets, with their galleons, ports, fortresses, checkpoints, schedules, etc.. Knowledge has been employed to design the slave ships and the sugar plantations. Knowledge has been employed to design the modern-day hotels and resorts.

Furthermore, knowledge in the form of discourse has been employed in such a way that it imposed on the Caribbean a position as colony, and a function as primary resource supplier and "free-market" dumping ground for First World commodities. It

imposed on the Caribbean subject the position of migrant, slave, coolie, nigger, docile servant, etc.. Under the imposing presence of this “colonizing gaze,” there is very little room to maneuver. Describing the effect, Fanon writes:

I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the “idea” that others have of me but of my own appearance.

I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for the upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare.¹⁴

This notion of “fixity” as advanced by Fanon is an integral and necessary part of the colonial discourse of otherness and alienation. Homi Bhabha elucidates the constitutive parts of the concept:

Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition.

Likewise the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place,’ already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated....It is this process of ambivalence...that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of

probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed.¹⁵

The process of silencing the native is therefore a carefully mapped-out strategy, one that is undertaken with the goal of stripping the Caribbean subject down to an alien existence, holding him/her captive to what the Martinician poet Edouard Glissant has termed “l’universel généralisant,” described as:

la prétention suffisante qui permet de sublimer la dignité de la personne à partir de la réalité de la propriété privée. *C’est aussi l’arme la plus concluante dans le processus de dépersonnalisation d’un peuple démuni.* (Emphasis added)¹⁶

Understanding the constructed nature of the stereotype, the stereotype-as-weapon, offers the opportunity to explore methods of deconstructing and counter-balancing it, which I will discuss later on in this work.

2—Collecting Fragments: The Caribbean Meta-Archipelago

Having recognized the necessity of avoiding the reproduction of an essentializing neo-colonial discourse, and acknowledging the tremendous differences that exist within the Caribbean, I would nonetheless question any reading of the area that would limit itself to partitioning off the various islands into separate, discrete units. Such a move is, in my eyes, not only unfeasible, but morally irresponsible. Like Williams, I would argue that “Given its past history, the future of the Caribbean can only be meaningfully discussed in terms of the possibilities for the emergence of an identity for the region and its peoples.”¹⁷ Key to such an emergence of identity is the (re-) establishment of linkages between the islands.

Toward this end, I would advance the argument, put forth by Antonio Benitez-Rojo in his book *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, that there does in fact exist in the Caribbean an underlying pattern of sorts that could justify the use of “the Caribbean” as a locus of exploration. Borrowing from the chaos theory of the natural sciences, he suggests as his starting point that “within the (dis)order that swarms around what we already know of as Nature, it is possible to observe dynamic states or regularities that repeat themselves globally.”¹⁸ Applied to the Caribbean, this search for recurring regularities amidst Chaos, this search for what Benitez-Rojo calls “the Repeating Island,” necessarily transcends calcifying geographical mappings, instead resulting in the re-conceptualization of the Caribbean as a “meta-archipelago.” He explains:

Within the sociocultural fluidity that the Caribbean archipelago represents...one can sense the features of an island that “repeats” itself, unfolding and bifurcating until it reaches all the seas and lands of the earth....This is...because the Caribbean is not a common archipelago, but a meta-archipelago, and as a meta-archipelago, it has the virtue of having neither a boundary nor a center. Thus the Caribbean flows outward past the limits of its own sea with a vengeance, and its *ultima Thule* may be found on the outskirts of Bombay, near the low and murmuring shores of Gambia, in a Cantonese tavern of circa 1850, at a Balinese temple, in an old Bristol pub, in a commercial warehouse in Bordeaux at the time of Colbert, in a windmill beside the Zuider Zee, at a cafe in a barrio of Manhattan, in the existential saudade of an old Portuguese lyric...¹⁹

And, we may surmise, if I may return to my initial example of hip-hop, in the grooves of a Run-DMC 12”.

This is not to say that the Caribbean simply dissolves itself into the world. Rather, the culture of the Caribbean “meta-archipelago,” just as it picks up fragments of other cultures as it flows outward, so too does it leave fragments of itself behind as it unfolds and changes forms, much like a receding tide. Viewed from this perspective, the link I have established between U.S. hip-hop and the culture of the Jamaican sound systems, while still discontinuous at best, can now be theorized as part of a moment of confluence concealed within the chaos of the Caribbean.

This moment of confluence, always partial, fleeting, is what Glissant has called “*la poetique de la relation.*” From here, we can begin to locate a notion of “Caribbean” identity. Such a notion can indeed only be grasped in relational terms, for, as Glissant explains:

Qu’est-ce que les Antilles en effet? *Une multi-relation.* Nous le ressentons tous, nous l’exprimons tous sous toutes sortes de formes occultes ou caricaturales, ou nous le nions farouchement. Mais nous éprouvons bien que cette mer est là en nous avec sa charge d’îles enfin découvertes. (Emphasis added)²⁰

It is to be expected that this Caribbean relationality would be expressed in terms of the sea that envelops the islands. The sea is what constitutes a fluid, incomplete, cross-cultural bridge. Continuing in this same vein, Benitez-Rojo declares that

the culture of the Caribbean, at least in its most distinctive aspect, is not terrestrial but aquatic, a sinuous culture where time unfolds irregularly and resists being

captured by the cycles of clock and calendar. The Caribbean is the natural and indispensable realm of marine currents, of waves, of folds and double-folds, of fluidity and sinuosity.²¹

Although this evocation of the “aquatic” nature of Caribbean culture may strike some as being dangerously close to “*l’universel généralisant*,” an essentialized Caribbean identity, it is an image that is grounded in the unpredictable, constantly shifting history of the Caribbean. While it is an image that embraces, and indeed celebrates, the diversity of the islands, it is also an image’ which recalls a rather more ominous role that the sea has played, and indeed continues to play, in linking together the fragmented islands of the Caribbean. Of course here I am speaking of the sea that forcibly removed well over 15 million Africans from their homeland in order have them live brutal lives as exploited slaves on the sugar plantations of the “New World.” I am speaking of the sea which swallowed up many more millions of Africans across the notorious Middle Passage. I am speaking of the sea which has carried the cargo boats of the United Fruit companies and the Manati Sugar companies and the Texacos, the latter-day fleets reminiscent of the Spanish colonial days, which have transported the natural wealth robbed from the islands to the U.S. metropolises. I am speaking of the sea which covers up the cables through which corrupt government officials and greedy businessmen running lucrative “off-shore enterprises” sap the capital of the Caribbean, siphoning it into numbered Swiss bank accounts. I am speaking of the sea which brings the cruise ships filled with American and European tourists eager to sample “a taste of the Caribbean,” in the form of U.S.-owned resorts barricaded off from the island residents, where the only non-whites allowed are the waiters, chambermaids, and entertainers. If we

are to view the Caribbean as a “multi-relation,” it is clear that the sea is what provides the founding basis, however unstable, for that relation.

3—Le Retour et le Détour

Therefore, the sea has played quite a paradoxical role in the construction of a Caribbean identity. Although the sea is what has provided the basis for a *poétique de la relation*, it is also what has destroyed the possibility of the Return, a founding claim to Caribbean identity in the first place. That claim has been transported elsewhere. If, as Radhakrishnan suggests, “postcolonial subjectivity is made to choose between its contemporary hybridity as sedimented by the violent history of colonialism and an indigenous genealogy as it existed prior to the colonialist chapter,”²² that choice is made impossible by the historical narrative of the Caribbean. For its “precolonial chapter” has been permanently erased by the gruesomely systematic extermination of its indigenous peoples, i.e. Caribs, Arawaks, etc. within the first hundred years of colonization. What remains is a population that, in one way or another, owes its existence in the islands to the colonial chapter of the Caribbean. Consequently, any attempt at reconstructing a Return must confront the fact that, as Glissant argues,

Dans les conditions actuelles, une population qui mettrait en acte la pulsion du Retour, et cela sans qu’elle se fut constituée en peuple, serait vouées aux amers ressouvenirs d’un possible à jamais perdu.²³

Indeed, the exploitative history of the slave trade, colonialism, and dependency has effectively taken the identity of the uprooted people of the Caribbean and made it

Other. The traditions handed down from generation to generation, the tools for cultural survival, have been radically displaced. Continuing with Glissant:

Cette population [transbordée] n'a pas emporté avec elle ni continué collectivement les techniques d'existence ou de survie matérielles et spirituelles qu'elle avait pratiquées avant son transbord. Ces techniques ne subsistent qu'en traces, ou sous forme de pulsions ou d'élans.²⁴

What is left, Glissant concludes, is not a return, but rather the Detour, a result, he says,

d'un enchevêtrement de négativités assumées comme telles....Le détour est le recours ultime d'une population dont la domination par un Autre est occultée: il faut aller chercher *ailleurs* le principe de domination, qui n'est pas évident dans le pays même: parce que le mode de domination (l'assimilation) est le meilleur des camouflages, parce que la matérialité de la domination (qui n'est pas l'exploitation seulement, qui n'est pas le sous-développement seulement, mais bien l'éradication globale de l'entité économique) n'est pas directement visible. Le Détour est la parallaxe de cette recherche.²⁵

The Detour manifests itself in the (post)colonial subject as a cognitive rupture that takes on an almost neurotic character, so much so that Frantz Fanon is driven to claim in *Black Skin, White Masks* that

Everything that an Antillean does is done for The Other. Not because The Other is the ultimate objective of his action in the sense of communication between

people,...but, more primitively, because it is The Other who corroborates him in his search for self-validation.²⁶

Thus, oftentimes among the people of the Caribbean we see the *pulsion du Retour* take the form of the return to the “Motherland,” meaning, in this case quite ironically, the colonial metropole. Many Caribbean intellectuals and cultural producers have in fact followed this very path, trading the uncertain figurative exile of Caribbean identity in the islands for a quite literal exile in the capitals of neo-colonial hegemony.

With some figures, the Return becomes an escape, the ultimate denial of identity. Naipaul, for example, recalls the following memory from his youth:

When I was in the fourth form I wrote a vow on the endpaper of my Kennedy’s Revised Latin Primer to leave [Trinidad] within five years. I left after six; and for many years afterwards in England falling asleep in bedsitters with the electric fire on, I had been awakened by the nightmare that I was back in tropical Trinidad.²⁷

Here, Naipaul’s negation of his fractured postcolonial identity, his search for affirmation from the Other, quite literally assumes a neurotic character, as evidenced by the psychosomatic onset of insomnia and nightmares which results from his migration. While the quote clearly indicates a phobia of his place of origin, it also implies the uncomfortable position of alienation that Naipaul experiences in the metropole. Despite his geographical distance, he can never be rid of the sea within, “*cette mer...la en nous.*” Moreover, he will always be constituted from without as a “transplanted colonial.” Hence, such a “return-as- escape” can only be accomplished by a discursive erasure of

the neo-colonial structures of violence which mediate postcolonial constructions of identity, which ultimately amounts to a denial of history.

Thus, I ask the question: is it possible to posit a Return that is historically informed by the disjunctive, fractured narratives of the Caribbean, one which both challenges and negotiates what Spivak has termed the neo-colonial “structures of violence?” Likewise, can the Caribbean subject articulate a space for communal identity, self-representation, and historical agency, in opposition to the disempowering dissection of the (neo-)colonizing gaze? I would argue that such a discursive project is possible, indeed necessary, in order to continue developing the insurgent narrative of resistance to colonialism that traces its roots back to the arrival of the first white colonizers in the islands. For it is important to remember that although we are discussing these questions of identity and agency at the level of language and culture, they cannot simply be viewed allegorically, somehow divorced from political systems of domination. Ultimately, the question is one of political power, a struggle against neo-colonial hegemony and oppression. Barbara Harlow makes the connection between cultural production and nationalism quite explicit in her work on resistance literature, or literature that is the outgrowth of armed decolonization struggles:

Culture...and language are critical as an arena of struggle, no less than as a part of that struggle, as one of the weapons....The use of language is crucial, both as challenge to the antagonist and in redefining the identity of the protagonist, to the strategy of any resistance movement.28

Today, this strategy of redefining the identity of the protagonist must take the form of creating a nationalist consciousness, what Benedict Anderson has termed an “imagined community,” with all the problems that it entails. Indeed, Radhakrishnan asserts that “projects of legitimation have become unthinkable except in nationalist terms: nationalism has become the absolute standard for the political as such. As a result, even the most ferocious counterhegemonic collective practices are forced to take on the discredited form of nationalism”²⁹ Within the abovementioned context of armed struggle for decolonization, this project of a creating a unifying narrative of nationalist consciousness is made much clearer, because much more urgent, through a common opposition to a very visible, very present oppressor. Consequently, in these cases the Return takes on a much more real, much more literal meaning—the return of the Homeland to its people. Thus Glissant is moved to say of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination:

le retour des Palestiniens dans leur pays n’est pas un recours stratégique, c’est un combat immédiat. La contemporanéité de l’expulsion et du retour est totale.

Celui-ci n’est pas pulsion compensatoire mais urgence vitale.³⁰

However, these totalizing narratives of national identity, when viewed unproblematically, have often themselves degenerated into *l’universel generalisant* and the reproduction of colonial systems of domination, particularly with regard to the perpetuation of patriarchy. The articulation of a an insurgent narrative of identity in the postcolonial context is further complicated the fact that, as Gayatri Spivak has noted:

Whatever the identitarian ethnicist claims of native or fundamental origin, the political claims that are most urgent in decolonized space are tacitly recognized as

coded within the legacy of imperialism : nationhood, constitutionality, citizenship, democracy, even culturalism. Within the historical frame of exploration, colonization, decolonization—what is being effectively reclaimed is a series of regulative political concepts, *the supposedly authoritative narrative of the production of which was written elsewhere, in the social formations of Western Europe*. They are being reclaimed, indeed claimed, as concept-metaphors for which no historically adequate referent may be advanced from postcolonial space, yet that does not make the claims less important.” (emphasis added)³¹

Thus, the Caribbean search for identity is caught in an epistemological double-bind: not only are its cultural forms and historical narratives located elsewhere, but so too are the very political tools needed for reclaiming them. Faced with this seemingly insurmountable obstacle, is it permissible to consider this search for identity as anything more than a contradiction in terms? Unfortunately, the Caribbean’s violent history of oppression, slavery and exploitation precludes such facile philosophical maneuvering: there can be no deferral. The choice is rather one of claiming agency in constituting one’s own identity, or simply being subsumed within the larger circuit of neo-colonial violence.

What strategies for claiming agency are then available to us, operating as we are within an epistemological system that is fundamentally hostile to such an undertaking? Referring to the above-mentioned concept-metaphors being claimed, Spivak notes that “A concept-metaphor without an adequate referent is a catachresis.”³² I would suggest this notion of catachresis as a potentially useful point of departure. It allows the neo-colonial subject access to the necessary tools for the construction of identity, while at the

same time recognizing their otherness. It acknowledges that, as Edward Said has put it, “The formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory taken back from the colonialist.”³³ By not internalizing the regulative concepts of identity and nationality as some essential “being,” the catachrestical articulation of the postcolonial voice always remains “on edge,” that is, always capable of interrogating its own position within the circuit of domination.

4—Noise in the Circuitry

Nonetheless, the question remains: what can we constitute as a founding catachresis in the Caribbean context? I have already spoken at some length about the sea as a recurring relation linking together the fragments of the Caribbean meta-archipelago and its colonial past. Pursuing this relation further, I propose that we consider noise as a potential relational concept. In his book *Noise: the Political Economy of Music*, Jacques Attali lays out his conception of noise:

A noise is a resonance that interferes with the audition of a message in the process of emission....Noise, then does not exist in itself, but *only in relation to the system within which it is inscribed*....Information theory uses the concept of noise...in a more general way: noise is the term for a signal that interferes with the reception of a message by a receiver, even if the interfering signal itself has a meaning for that receiver. (emphasis added)³⁴

Noise resists representation, because it cannot be located. Like the meta-archipelago, it insinuates itself everywhere, a background noise interrupting the regulative codes of daily life. It seeps through the cracks of seemingly cohesive, rational

networks of knowledge, eroding the connections between them. It creates its own space, independent of its surroundings; it cannot be excluded. Speaking of auditory space,

Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan have observed that it

has no point of favored focus. It's a sphere without fixed boundaries, space made by the thing itself, not space containing the thing. It is not pictorial space, boxed in, but dynamic, always in flux, creating its own dimensions moment by moment. It has no fixed boundaries; it is indifferent to background. The eye focuses, pinpoints, abstracts, locating each object in physical space, against a background; the ear, however, favours sound from any direction. We hear equally well from right or left, front or back, above or below. If we lie down, it makes no difference, whereas in visual space the entire spectacle is altered. We can shut out the visual field by simply closing our eyes, but we are always triggered to respond to sound.³⁵

Due to its displaced, ephemeral character, the space created by noise is inherently subversive, altering the intended codes of meaning, always inserting itself in addition to what has been sent. Consequently, Attali explains,

[Theorists of totalitarianism] have all explained, indistinctly, that it is necessary to ban subversive noise because it betokens demands for cultural autonomy, support for differences or marginality: a concern for maintaining tonalism, the primacy of melody, a distrust of new languages, codes, or instruments, a refusal of the abnormal—these characteristics are common to all regimes of that nature. They

are direct translations of the political importance of cultural repression and noise control.³⁶

The Caribbean narrative is founded on noise. This is the unstable, shifting base that lurks beneath the waves, in the canefields, around the resorts, in the marketplaces. It is ritualized and released once a year during Carnival. It also surfaces in the literary and cultural forms of the islands. It is in the polyrhythms of calypso, soca, and reggae, the syncretism of creole language, the ritual of Santeria and Vodun. More importantly for the purposes of this work, it finds its way into the novels, plays, and poems of the Caribbean. As Glissant has noted: “pour l’Antillais, le mot est d’abord son. Le bruit est parole. Le vacarme est discours. Il faut comprendre cela.”³⁷

Caribbean literature, originating out of this founding noise, cannot be understood within the circuit of hegemonic colonizing discourse. It expresses a voice alien to that of the colonizer, one that contests the preferred, institutionalized meanings of the dominant cultural order. It is a voice encoded within what Bhabha calls the “unhomely moment,” that which “relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence.”³⁸ The “unhomeliness” of the Caribbean voice is misunderstood and marginalized when decoded within the structures of hegemonic colonizing discourse because it expresses a radical asymmetry between what Stuart Hall has designated as the “codes of ‘source’ and ‘receiver’ at the moment of transformation into and out of the discursive form.”³⁹ When forcibly written into such a reductive discursive form, the Caribbean voice/subject loses its voice, becoming a modern-day manifestation of Foucault’s medieval madman:

A man was mad if his speech could not be said to form part of the common discourse of men. His words were considered null and void, without truth or significance, worthless as evidence, inadmissible in the authentication of acts or contracts, incapable even of bringing about transubstantiation...at Mass. And yet, in contrast to all others, his words were credited with strange powers, of revealing some hidden truth, of predicting the future, of revealing, in all their naiveté, what the wise were unable to perceive. It is curious to note that for centuries, in Europe, the words of a madman were either totally ignored or else were taken as words of truth. They either fell into a void—rejected the moment they were proffered—or else men deciphered in them a naive or cunning reason, rationality more rational than that of a rational man....Whatever a madman said, it was taken for mere noise; he was credited with words only in a symbolic sense, in the theatre, in which he stepped forward, unarmed and reconciled, playing his role: that of masked truth.⁴⁰

Indeed, the voice of the Caribbean subject/madman today must, in Harlow's words, "be either domesticated or else disacknowledged as 'literature'."⁴¹ Thus on the one hand, the privileging in the academy of authors like Naipaul, whom, Said maintains, "has allowed himself quite consciously to be turned into a witness for the Western prosecution,"⁴² an "authentic" voice of "the Caribbean experience;" and on the other hand, the continuing exclusion of all but a select handful of Caribbean authors from the general humanities curriculum. As Fanon put it, the question for the subject caught in the eyes of the white colonizer is: "where am I to be classified? Or, if you prefer, tucked

away?”⁴³ Listening to Fanon, we find the expression of the situation of the modern-day madman:

A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man—or at least like a nigger. I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed away my joy. I was told to stay within bounds, to go back where I belonged.

They would see, then! I had warned them, anyway. Slavery? It was no longer even mentioned, that unpleasant memory. My supposed inferiority? A hoax that it was better to laugh at.⁴⁴

Hemmed in, denied his own existence by the colonizer, the project that laid before him was clear: “Since the other hesitated to recognize me, there remained only one solution: to make myself known.”⁴⁵

Hence the acknowledgement and celebration of founding noise. Beyond simply making the subject known, noise denaturalizes the Western epistemological codes of domination, those that Hall contends may be

so widely distributed in a specific language community or culture, and be learned at so early an age, that they appear not to be constructed—the effect of an articulation between sign and referent—but to be ‘naturally’ given.⁴⁶

Hall demonstrates that these naturalized codes are the result of “a fundamental alignment and reciprocity—an achieved equivalence—between the encoding and decoding sides of an exchange of meanings.”⁴⁷ However, as I have already established above, Caribbean noise is characterized by the asymmetrical—that is, non-aligned, non-

reciprocal—relation it establishes between the codes of source and receiver—that is, between the codes of colonized and colonizer. Thus the sides of the exchange are fundamentally displaced.

Let us take for example my earlier mention of Bhabha's concept of the stereotype as constitutive element of the fixative gaze. Recognizing its ambivalent nature, how it must at the same time remain fluid so as to retain relevance in changing situations, but also how it must constantly repeat and reinscribe itself upon the subject, so as to retain its "truth-value," we can thus construct in the interstitial spaces of cognitive slippage between those two diverging conceptions a potential space of resistance. Historically we see examples of these spaces of resistance in the narratives of slaves who were educated as they waited on their master's children at school, because the teacher thought that they were too savage to understand anything. Or in the sly grins and docile mannerisms of a group of Plantation slaves as they quietly plot the burning down of the master's house.

Such examples, or rather performances, self-consciously operate within the given matrix of domination, taking the stereotypical view of the "stupid, lazy nigger" and exploiting it within possible limits, thus short-circuiting the network of hegemonic codings. These short-circuits can prove quite damaging to the network at times.

Returning to Attali, he claims that:

A network can be destroyed by noises that attack and transform it, if the codes in place are unable to normalize and repress them. Although the new order is not contained in the structure of the old, it is nonetheless not a product of chance. It is created by the substitution of new differences for the old differences. Noise is the

source of these mutations in the structuring codes. For despite the death it contains, noise carries order within itself; it carries new information.⁴⁸

According to him, this new information is a prophetic display of future socio-political structures. Continuing in this vein, I would contend that in listening to the noise of the Caribbean, we can detect not only the murmurs of dissatisfaction with current modes of existence, but also the prophetic, embryonic codes of a future order of things, a praxis of human liberation, echoing Fanon's hopes:

Toward a new humanism. . . .

Understanding among men. . . .

Our colored brothers. . . .

Mankind, I believe in you. . . .

Race prejudice. . . .

To understand and to love. . . .⁴⁹

5—Syncretism and Mimicry: The Ghosts in the Machine

In contrast to the rigidly reductive coding apparatus of Western epistemology, which seeks to name, classify and regulate, the noise apparatus of the Caribbean has no trouble addressing discontinuities, partialities, fragments; rather it welcomes them, acknowledging “the noise upon which the word is based, the discrepant foundation of all coherence and articulation, of the purchase upon the world fabrication affords.”⁵⁰ In this sense the apparatus constitutes a type of “feed-back machine,” “a chaos that returns, a detour without a purpose, a continual flow of paradoxes;”⁵¹ one that incorporates the

hyper-syncretic inputs of African, Asian, indigenous, and European cultures and proceeds to rebroadcast the newly-created results far beyond the narrow geographical confines of the conglomeration of islands and South American nations commonly referred to as “the Caribbean.” Developing this concept further, Benitez-Rojo proposes that

the Caribbean machine...is something more: it is a technological-poetic machine, or, if you like, a metamachine of differences whose poetic mechanism cannot be diagrammed in conventional dimensions, and whose user’s manual is found dispersed in a state of plasma within the chaos of its own network of codes and subcodes.⁵²

To some, this super-syncretism is viewed as a sign of weakness, a handicap to the development of Caribbean culture. Indeed, Williams is moved to remark that:

Artistic, community and individual values are not for the most part authentic but, to borrow the language of the economist, possess a high import content, the vehicles of import being the educational system, the mass media, the films, and the tourists. V. S. Naipaul’s description of West Indians as “mimic men” is harsh, but true.⁵³

Beyond merely calling the people mimic-men, Naipaul in fact has gone so far as to assert that “nothing was created in the British West Indies....There were only plantations, prosperity, decline, neglect: the size of the islands called for nothing else.”⁵⁴ According to him, culture and politics here can only take the form of mimicry: as such, “no gesture is authentic, every sentence is a quotation, every movement either ambitious or pathetic, and because it is mimicry, uncreative.”⁵⁵ Challenging this view, we find Derek Walcott, who replies: “Precisely, precisely...nothing will always be created in the

West Indies, for quite a long time, because what will come out of there is like nothing one has seen before.”⁵⁶ Indeed, as I have shown already, the Caribbean or West Indies is a complex web of interrelations whose underlying narratives we have never seen before, because they have always led elsewhere. Understood in this way, Walcott’s “nothing” is once again a manifestation of the foundational noise of the Caribbean, that catachrestical, shifting base that acknowledges its own radical disjuncture, and points to its own shortcomings, “always after the empire of reason, [its] claims always short of adequate.”⁵⁷ It is a supplementary code which inserts itself in addition to what the intended signal is, interrupting the preferred circuits of representation.

Because the supplementary code, or “nothing code,” as we might call it, is in addition to, there is necessarily a dependence on, or more precisely a relation to, what has come before. However, the presence of the nothing code, the mimicked form, can be seen as somewhat more subversive. As Bhabha explains:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference....Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers.⁵⁸

Indeed, Bhabha continues, “the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority.”⁵⁹ To illustrate this point, I might point out that this double vision finds its articulation in what Jamaican dub producers call “versioning,” the practice of remixing different “versions” of the same song. As Dick Hebdige describes it, “every time a version is released, the original tune will be slightly modified.”⁶⁰ Each version is identifiable as being the same song, but not quite: there is slippage, there is difference—“the original version takes on a new life in a fresh context.”⁶¹ The version challenges the authority of the original by appropriating the original forms and distorting them slightly, making them slightly other. Moreover, the creation of the new version affects the way we reapproach the original. As such, the version becomes an integral part of the original, eventually blurring the lines of precedence between the two: “[versioning] implies that no one has the final say. Everybody has a chance to make a contribution. And no one’s version is treated as Holy Writ.”⁶²

Similarly, writing in the Caribbean is versioned from the colonial metropole, assuming its forms and using its languages. Many Caribbean writers, like Aimé Césaire, Derek Walcott, Simone Schwartz-Bart, Edouard Glissant, Wilson Harris, Maryse Conde, educated largely at European and U.S. universities, are in fact quite well-known for their exquisite mastery of European languages and forms. But, no matter how close they may approximate their former colonial masters in form, they always remain different, marginal, not quite/not white. Coming after the colonial form, the Caribbean version calls attention to the slippage between itself and the original. Originating as it does out of the foundational, relational noise of the meta-archipelago, the version brings out the

dissonant rumblings of the bass/base in the mix, “voicing reminders of the axiomatic exclusions upon which positings of identity and meaning depend.”⁶³ It is a decoding dub.

The two works I have chosen to study in the following section highlight the tremendous diversity of literary production in the Caribbean, while also exhibiting many examples of the recurring patterns and linkages that form the noisy networks of the Caribbean meta-archipelago. The criteria for selection can only be described as arbitrary at best, as there is so much to choose from. I have managed to include works by two major (meaning better-known) authors from two of the major linguistic traditions: the Martinician Aimé Césaire, and the St. Lucian Derek Walcott. Both works deal in some way with questions of Caribbean identity, and both are written from a strongly anti-colonialist framework. I would not consider these works representative of any particular literature, although they do share certain relations. Most of all, I simply view them as particular points of entry into the tangled web of signals that constitutes Caribbean cultural production.

Side Two—The Remixes

DUB VERSION: Oppositional Codings of Language in Aimé Césaire’s *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*

“The evidence was there, unalterable. My blackness was there, dark and unarguable. And it tormented me, pursued me, disturbed me, angered me.”

—Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

In the history of the development of literature in the Caribbean, Aimé Césaire stands as one of the most significant signposts. An outspoken champion of the international Black intellectual/cultural movement known as *négritude*, he articulated the voice of the colonized subject in the form of “*le cri*,” the uncontrolled outburst of repressed anger and hostility that builds up under colonization. With this cry he sought to develop “une nouvelle rhétorique qui réveillera les participants dans la tragédie colonialiste de leur indifférence à la souffrance humaine.”⁶⁴

His first attempt at developing such a new rhetoric was his *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*.⁶⁵ First published in serialized format in 1939, Césaire wrote it in anticipation of returning to his homeland of Martinique after an exile of eight years in Paris for educational purposes. Poetically prophetic, the work juxtaposes his own personal process of self-discovery and revolt to those of oppressed peoples worldwide, particularly those of African descent. It moves from an anguished exposition of the suffering and destruction wrought by racist and classist colonial history in Martinique, to a searing attack against the dominant structures responsible for this destruction, and finally

resolves itself in a hopeful vision of social transformation and the liberation of oppressed peoples.

In undertaking his project, Césaire understood the necessity of addressing the profound linkage between the colonial structures of dominance and language. Indeed, as Keith Walker has explained,

pour Césaire, la transformation langagiere est inséparable de la transformation sociale. Repenser la logique du langage entraine le poète à repenser la logique de toute pratique, et surtout la pratique de la loi.⁶⁶

In order to articulate the voice of the native, it was first necessary to silence the voice of the colonizer within. Thus, in a rather telling episode, Césaire was compelled to burn all the classical verse that he had composed previously before he could begin work on the Cahier.⁶⁷ With this practice of a radical counter-memory, that is a remembering to forget, he constructed his return to the native land.

However, Césaire could not completely forget, as he was caught within the mechanisms of colonial contradiction: raised in poverty, he attended French school, leaving Martinique to study at the Lycee Louis le Grand and the École Normale Supérieure; he enjoyed the French literature to which he had been exposed, particularly Rimbaud and the Symbolist literature of Mallarmé and Lautréamont; he spoke and wrote in the language of Molière, that of “our ancestors, the Gauls.” The question then for Césaire was not so much one of forgetting and rejecting, but rather one of reversing, recoding, and ultimately subverting. The objective was rather close to that expressed by Abdelkebir Khatibi in the Maghrebian context, namely

to take his own distance on the language by inverting it, destroying it and presenting new structures *to the point where the French reader would feel a stranger in his own language*. (Emphasis added)⁶⁸

Clearly, noise plays a key role in Césaire's project of "unhoming" and recoding. His *Cahier* serves as a paradigmatic example of the way noise subverts the old structures by inserting itself in the cracks of the old structures of language, insinuating itself in addition to what is already there, thus creating a partial oppositional identity within the structures themselves. Lilyan Kesteloot has said of his writing that:

Le poème césairien c'est l'outil à fracasser les murs et les clôtures, à briser les barreaux, à escalader les forteresses, c'est la clef à ouvrir les portes interdites, c'est la fleche au curare de l'Indien embusqué qui touche au ventre l'ennemi de la tribu.⁶⁹

Beginning with the very title of the work, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, he breaks open conventional barriers of naming and defining, challenging their arbitrariness. He names his work a "cahier," not a poem, or a novel, or a play; as such it refuses to be classified, tucked away within the traditional confines of literary studies. It boldly, noisily announces its presence, and refuses to submit. Deliberately keeping a vague numerative pronoun, i.e. *un retour*, points to the specificity of this particular return, the Return, but also simultaneously invokes a multiplicity of returns. Thus, Césaire immediately establishes a bond of commonality through time, an historical connection between himself, currently undertaking the Return; past generations who have already undertaken it; and future generations who have yet to do so. Additionally, by avoiding a discursive appropriation of the land—it is "au pays natal," not "a mon pays natal"—Césaire

suggests that the “native land” can be something beyond his own island of Martinique, a “homely” space expanding outward from one’s consciousness, like the meta-archipelago.

Proceeding into the text, we are immediately confronted with a note of dissonance, a voice that has nothing to do with conventional poetics of beauty and form, “*la séduction circonstancielle du beau parler.*”⁷⁰ Rather, the voice angrily and violently lashes out at us, guarding the point of entry to the work, expressing wariness of the mechanisms of domination:

Va-t’en, lui disais-je, gueule de flic, gueule de vache, va-t’en, je déteste les larbins de l’ordre et les hannetons de l’espérance. Va-t’en, mauvais gri-gri, punaise de moinillon. (p. 34)

Such violently dissonant outbursts prove to be a common theme throughout the *Cahier*, elements of a destructive discursive force that razes the previously existing oppressive structures, in order to make way for a reconstructive, liberatory force. Daniel M. Scott has termed this Césaire’s “poetic of violence”:

Contradictory by its very nature, violence creates as it destroys; it enables both oppression and liberation; it circulates from extreme to extreme, resolving apparent contradictions. By adopting violence as a means and method for the construction of *Cahier*, Césaire embraces the paradox of violence. He makes of his poem both a weapon and a healing balm; out of the ashes of rage and revolt will rise a new humanity. Language born of pain will heal; men born of oppression will find liberation.⁷¹

The first step in Césaire's decoding strategy as laid out in the Cahier is to create a portrait of his native land stripped of the sanitized, idealized images of a tropical paradise. Thus in the opening pages Césaire shows us Fort de France, "*cette ville plate-étalée,*" in all its misery. It is a place which colonial history has left in shambles; decrepit, corrupt, and crippled:

Au bout du petit matin, l'échouage hétéroclite, les puanteurs exacerbées de la corruption, les sodomies monstrueuses de l'hostie et du victimaire, les coltis infranchissables du préjugé et de la sottise, les prostitutions, les hypocrisies, les lubricites, les trahisons, les mensonges, les faux, les concussions—l'essoufflement des lâchetés insuffisantes, l'enthousiasme sans ahan aux poussis numéraires, les avidités, les hysterics, les perversions, les arléquinades de la misère, les estropiements, les prurits, les urticaires, les hamacs tièdes de la dégénérescence. Ici la parade des risibles et scrofuleux bubons, les poutures de microbes très étranges, les poisons sans alexitère connu, les sanies de plaies bien antiqués, les fermentations imprévisibles d'espèces putrescibles. (pp. 37-38)

This is home, but it is a home marked by dislocation, stagnation and silence: "cette ville inerte...cette foule criarde si étonamment passée a côté de son cri comme cette ville a côté de son mouvement." (p. 34) It is a home forgotten and neglected, inhospitable and almost uninhabitable.

Hence the second section of the work, beginning with the suggestive infinitive "partir." The verb is double coded in this context: on the one hand, "partir" recalls the past, the longing Césaire felt as a child to leave decrepit Martinique behind, to escape to

the metropole; on the other hand, it implies the necessity of his return, his re/membrance of the island-home. In a moment of recuperation, he proposes his plan to leave in order to link the misery of the people in Martinique to a larger oppression:

Comme il y a des hommes-hyenes et des hommes-pantheres, je serais un homme-juif

un homme-cafre

un homme-hindou-de-Calcutta

un homme-de-Harlem-qui-ne-vote-pas (p. 42)

All these share the identity of “l’homme-famine, l’homme insulte, l’homme torture,” that identity which ensured that the oppressor/colonizer

...pouvait a n’importe quel moment le saisir,

le rouer de coups, le tuer—parfaitement le tuer—sans avoir de compte a rendre a personne, sans avoir

d’excuses a presenter a personne

un homme-juif

un homme-pogrom

un chiot

un mendigot (p. 42)

All are equally disposable, not even considered human in some cases. However, Césaire points out the dehumanizing effect that this treatment has not only on the colonized, but on the colonizer as well. Reversing the image of the cannibalistic native,

the European is forced to consider the cannibalism of colonialism, embodied in the Hottentot skull that finds its way into the soup-dish of the proper English woman (p. 42).

Continuing with his project of identification, he proposes a repossession and recoding of the language of nature, a re-creation of the world:

Je retrouverais le secret des grandes communications et des grandes combustions.
Je dirais orage. Je dirais fleuve. Je dirais tornade. Je dirais feuille. Je dirais arbre.
...Qui ne me comprendrait pas ne comprendrait davantage le rugissement du tigre.
(pp. 42-44)

Setting himself up as the prophet/mouthpiece of the oppressed with his newfound control of language, he envisions his homecoming:

Partir. . . j'arriverais lisse et jeune dans ce pays mien et je dirais a ce pays dont le limon entre dans la composition de ma chair: "J'ai longtemps erré et je reviens vers la hideur desertée de vos plaies."

Je viendrais a ce pays mien et je lui dirais: "Embrassez-moi sans crainte. . .Et si je ne sais que parler, c'est pour vous que je parlerai."

Et je lui dirais encore:

"Ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté de celles qui s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir." (p. 44)

Finally, he arrives in the island, living once again amidst the devastation, "non pas cette vie, cette mort...ou la grandeur piteusement echoue" (p. 44). Returning now from abroad with his opened conscience, he feels constrained, incapable "de me reduire a ce petit rien ellipsoïdal qui tremble a quatre doigts au-dessus de ligne." In opposition to the

colonial geography that hems in the native, Césaire establishes a geography of liberation, based in history, “la geometrie de mon sang repandu;” a geography that defiantly reaches out from the island to reclaim other colonized spaces, to name and take back what belongs to it; one that sees the relations between locations:

Ce qui est a moi, ces quelques milliers de mortifères qui tournent en rond dans la calebasse d’un île et ce qui est à moi aussi, l’archipel arqué comme le désir inquiet de se nier, on dirait une anxiété maternelle pour protéger la ténuité plus délicate qui sépare l’une de l’autre Amérique; et ses flancs qui secrètent pour l’Europe la bonne liqueur d’un Gulf Stream, et l’un des deux versants d’incandescence entre quoi l’Équateur funambule vers l’Afrique. Et mon île non-clôture, sa claire audace debout l’arrière de cette polynésie, devant elle, la Guadeloupe fendue en deux de sa raie dorsale et de mer misère que nous, Haiti ou la négritude se mit debout pour la première fois et dit qu’elle croyait à son humanité et la comique petite queue de la Floride ou d’un nègre s’achève la strangulation, et l’Afrique gigantesquement chenillant jusqu’au pied hispanique de l’Europe, sa nudité où la mort fauche à large andains. (p. 46)

With this realization that there is, in fact, “pas un bout de ce monde qui ne porte mon empreinte digitale,”(p. 46) Césaire’s geography can lay claim to territories deep within colonial territory, thus shifting the ground beneath the existing relationships of domination:

Et je me dis Bordeaux et Nantes et Liverpool et New-York et San-Francisco. (p. 46)

Invoking these names like a solemn mantra, Césaire injects them with new meaning, effectively creating his own “version” of the metropole. This version takes its cues from “l’île non cloture,” the consciously Other rhythms and traditions of the African diaspora:

voum rooh oh
voum rooh oh
à charmer les serpents à conjurer
les morts
voum rooh oh
a contraindre la pluie a contrarier
les raz de marée
voum rooh oh
a empêcher que ne tourne l’ombre
voum rooh oh que mes cieux à moi
s’ouvrent (p. 52)

Understandably, it is a version that has little use for the traditional European ordering constructs of Beauty and Reason:

Raison, je te sacre vent du soir.
Bouche de l’ordre ton nom?
Il m’est corolle du fouet.
Beaute je t’appelle petition de la pierre.
Mais ah! la rauque contrebande

de mon rire
Ah! mon trésor de salpêtre!
Parce que nous vous haïssons vous
et votre raison nous nous réclamons
de la démence précoce de la folie flamboyante
du cannibalisme tenace (p. 48)

It is a version that challenges the colonialist, catches him off guard, puts him on the defensive:

En vain dans la tièdure de votre gorge
mûrissez-vous vingt fois la même pauvre
consolation que nous sommes des
marmonneurs de mots (p. 56)

Ultimately, it is an insurgent version that demands that it be considered on its own terms:

Accommodez-vous de moi. Je ne m'accommode pas de vous! (p. 56)

Although Césaire's version actively subverts colonial systems of domination, it is limited by the fact that it is itself written into those very systems. Its history is ugly and painful, echoing "les maledictions enchaînées, les hoquettements des mourants, le bruit d'un qu'on jette à la mer" (p. 62) of the Middle Passage, the brutality of the Plantation, the confinement of colonialism. Any attempt at liberation must first negotiate these

horrific episodes, must recognize the grotesque within. For the narrator of the Cahier, this moment of recognition occurs in the oft-recited “streetcar scene”:

Un soir, dans un tramway en face de moi, un nègre. C’était un nègre grand comme un pongo qui essayait de se faire tout petit sur un banc de tramway.

C’était un nègre dégingandé sans rythme ni mesure

Et l’ensemble faisait parfaitement un nègre hideux, un nègre grognon, un nègre mélancolique, un nègre affale, ses mains réunies en prière sur un bâton noueux. Un nègre enseveli dans une vieille veste élimée. Un nègre comique et laid et des femmes derrière moi ricanaient en le regardant.

Il était COMIQUE ET LAID,
COMIQUE ET LAID pour sur.

J’arborai un grand sourire complice. . .

Ma lâcheté retrouvée! (p. 62)

He recognizes that the women could just as well be laughing at him as at the “pongo nigger.” By virtue of their black bodies, the women simply lump them together. Thus, the narrator is forced to see himself in the Other, to recognize their common identity, their common future:

Je me cachais derrière une vanité stupide le destin m’appelait j’étais caché derrière et voici l’homme par terre, sa très fragile défense dispersée, ses maximes sacrées foulées aux pieds, ses déclamations pédantesques rendant du

vent par chaque blessure.

Voici l'homme par terre

et son âme est comme nue

et le destin triomphe qui contemple se muer en l'ancestral borbier cette âme qui le défiait. (p. 64)

Ultimately the narrator accepts his sullied past: "J'accepte... j'accepte... entièrement, sans réserve... ma race qu'aucune ablution d'hypsospe et de lys mêlés ne pourrait purifier." (p. 72) In so doing, he throws off the eternal stigma of his blackness, boldly affirming his living, breathing *négritude* : "ma *négritude* n'est pas une pierre, sa surdit  ru e contre la clameur du jour." (p. 68) Armed with a knowledge of the past, and a common vision for the future, the former slaves, the colonial subjects, the wretched of the earth can now stand up and assert themselves, as embodied by the "nigger scum" at the end of the Cahier :

Et elle est debout la n graille

plus inattendument debout

debout dans les cordages

debout   la barre

debout   la boussole

debout   la carte

debout sous les  toiles

debout

et

libre (p. 80)

While Césaire's impassioned affirmation of *négritude* was absolutely path-breaking for his time, it has been criticized for its excessive/regressive reliance on irrationality. Listen for example to Fanon's criticism:

I had rationalized the world and the world had rejected me on the basis of color prejudice. Since no agreement was possible on the level of reason, I threw myself back toward unreason. It was up to the white man to be more irrational than I. Out of the necessities of my struggle I had chosen the method of regression, but the fact remained that it was an unfamiliar weapon; here I am at home; I am made of the irrational; I wade in the irrational. Up to the neck in the irrational. And now how my voice vibrates!⁷²

In simply taking refuge in irrationality and neo-primitivism, Césaire merely reverses the colonizing structures of dominance, privileging irrationality over rationality, instead of vice versa. The structures themselves are not questioned or displaced. Nonetheless, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* remains important today both for its searing indictment of the ravages of colonialisms both political and mental, as well as for its innovative recoding of language as a part of a larger struggle to articulate a liberatory consciousness for oppressed peoples everywhere.

CLUB VERSION: Mimicry and Appropriation in Derek Walcott's *Pantomime*

“like Christofer he bears
in speech mnemonic as a missionary’s
the Word to savages,
its shape an earthen, water-bearing vessel’s
whose sprinkling alters us
into good Fridays who recite His praise,
parroting our master’s
style and voice, we make his language ours,
converted cannibals
we learn with him to eat the flesh of Christ.”

—Derek Walcott, *Crusoe's Journal*

It is entirely understandable that Derek Walcott, author of “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” would also write a play like *Pantomime*.⁷³ A rather humorous exploration of the relationship between Harry Trewe, a transplanted white British music-hall actor-turned-hotel resort manager, and Jackson Philip, his Black calypsonian-turned-servant, the play can be understood as a literary manifestation of Walcott’s thesis that “nothing will always be created in the West Indies, for quite a long time, because what will come out of there is like nothing one has seen before.” The action centers around Trewe’s attempts to mount a production of a pantomime of Robinson Crusoe. As such the very text itself is nothing, because it always comes after Defoe’s text. Moreover, nothing is in fact created in the course of the play, as the end result of a performance is deferred

in perpetuity. Nonetheless, the detour undertaken instead offers an insightful examination of the relationship between the formerly silenced native and his master operating in decolonized space.

From the first, Harry Trewe is set up as a somewhat liberal, but nonetheless willing colonizer. Walcott has said that he views Harry as the prototypical Englishman, emotionally repressed, always with a stiff upper lip.⁷⁴ He enters the stage at the beginning of the first act carrying a tape recorder, symbolic of his position of dominance and his consuming need for order. Attali has said of tape recorders that:

Possessing the means of recording allows one to monitor noises, to maintain them, and to control their repetition within a determined code. In the final analysis, it allows one to impose one's own noise and to silence others.⁷⁵

True to form, he begins by using the tape recorder to rehearse a calypso routine, thus appropriating and degrading the form by freezing it in time, destroying any opportunity for improvisation, which is after all one of the main features of calypso. It is impossible for Trewe to be impulsive, to improvise, to show any true emotion. He is limited to the role he is assigned, and with grim resolve, he plays it to the hilt.

In stark contrast to Trewe's fixity, it is clear from the outset that, despite his position of employment as a servant, Jackson is infinitely more mobile, slipping in and out of roles as need be, without ever committing to one or the other. He offers a discrepant counterweight to Trewe's quest for classification and order. As such, he is the perfect embodiment of what Bhabha calls "sly civility," meaning "the native refusal to satisfy the colonizer's narrative demand."⁷⁶ He refuses to be pinned down. His very

name, Jackson Philip, is a challenge to agreed-upon conventions of naming, an inversion of name and surname. Arriving onstage after Trewe at the beginning of the first act, he consciously mimics the role of the properly cultured butler, while simultaneously undermining that representation by wearing a white waiter's jacket and black trousers, but going barefoot. Almost the same, but not quite/not white. As he proceeds to speak, he demonstrates his facility in moving from role to role, assuming in turns a British and a Creole accent. Even within the English accent, he continues to produce slippage between the "real thing" and his mimicry by allowing Creole syntax to infiltrate the sentence:

"Mr. Trewe, your scramble eggs is here! are here!" (p. 94)

When Trewe proposes doing the Crusoe pantomime, Jackson is understandably reticent about assisting in the proceedings:

Mr. Trewe, you come back with that same rake again? I tell you, I ain't no actor, and I ain't walking in front a set of tourists naked playing cannibal. Carnival, but not canni-bal. (p. 96)

It is indeed fitting in this situation that Jackson would propose the tradition of carnival as an alternative to Friday, as its fluid form resists easy demarcation and colonization, directly in opposition to the European-perceived and -imposed stereotype of cannibalism. While Jackson is quite adept at maneuvering between different positions, he is also acutely aware of the fact that the colonial past has already assigned him certain roles that are considerably more difficult to evade, for example that of the cannibal, or more recently, that of the entertainer.

In order to assuage Jackson's concerns, Trewe offers to reverse the roles, "with Crusoe the slave and Friday the boss." (p. 117) At first Jackson doesn't buy it: "you got balls, too, excuse me, Mr. Trewe, to even consider doing such a thing like that! Good. Joke finish. Breakfast now, eh?" (p. 101) Jackson knows that

a servant giving orders does not a master make. The servant "dominates" the master, but he is still the servant. The servant remains bound by the white power structure, economic reality and ideology.⁷⁷

For Trewe, reversing the roles is simply providing an "ironic twist" for his audience, a tantalizing taboo that could be "hilarious." He keeps on trying to remind Jackson that "it's pantomime,...just keep it light. . .Make them laugh." (p. 112)

However, reversing the roles is something much more serious for Jackson, something that cannot be "kept light," as it finds its roots in the painfully real history of colonialism:

Jackson: Hilarious, Mr. Trewe? Supposing I wasn't a waiter, and instead of breakfast I was serving you communion, this Sunday morning on this tropical island, and I turn to you, Friday, to teach you my faith, and I tell you, kneel down and eat this man. Well, kneel, nuh! What you think you would say, eh?

(Pause)

You, this white savage?

Harry: No, that's cannibalism

Jackson: Is no more cannibalism than to eat a god. Suppose I make you tell me:
For three hundred years I have made you my servant. For three hundred years . . .

(pp. 111-112)

Such a reversal is necessarily trivializing, and can never do justice to history. Pathetically, all that Trewe can muster in response to such charges is more parroting of “It’s pantomime, Jackson, keep it light!” However, Jackson uses the opportunity to reverse the imperialist story, constructing an new character out of the shadow of the white Crusoe: a Black Crusoe, which he initially calls Thursday, who now teaches Robinson, the European Friday:

Robinson obey Thursday now. Speak Thursday language. Obey Thursday gods.

(p. 114)

Inventing a new language borne out of an African aesthetic, Jackson frenetically moves about the room, renaming everything in sight: tables, cups, chairs, etc., short circuiting the existing codes of representation, creating a new order of things. Trewe wants the performance subtitled, made explicitly clear to him, but that is not its purpose.

At every turn, Jackson challenges the conventional narratives, inserting discrepant noises that disturb and upset. Alternately identifying with Crusoe and Friday, “he refuses to act the role of Friday, and he does not imprison himself in a mythical black Crusoe.”⁷⁸ For example, as Trewe attempts to reproduce the grand narrative of Crusoe’s shipwreck and subsequent establishment on the island, Jackson reduces the magnificent ship to a rowboat; he brings in practical considerations of clothing and shelter, including the

hunting of goats; he plans for the eventuality of a ship rescuing him. Taken altogether, this radical revision of the Crusoe myth subverts the traditional solitary tragic image we have of the shipwreck on the beach. It is a revisioning created out of “Creole acting,” a tradition that does not attempt to create any sort of founding myth, a tradition that recognizes both practical and aesthetic values. Trewe, caught within the confines of “classical acting,” (and poor classical acting at that) is profoundly unsettled by observing the story as projected through the eyes of the Other, as it undermines the totalized and heroic historical narratives that he has internalized. Eventually, he explodes:

Harry: You will not continue. You will straighten this table, put back the tablecloth, take away the breakfast things, give me back the hat, put your jacket back on, and we will continue as normal and forget the whole matter. Now, I’m very serious, I’ve had enough of this farce. I would like to stop. (p. 124)

However, Jackson continues unabated, making no apologies. He demands to have his voice heard:

This is the story . . . this is history. This moment that we are now acting here is the history of imperialism; it’s nothing less than that. And I don’t think that I can—should—concede my getting into a part halfway and abandoning things, just because you, as my superior, give me orders....I could play anybody discovering anywhere, but I don’t want you to tell me when and where to draw the line!

(Pause)

Or what to discover and when to discover it. All right? (p. 125)

Finally, powerless to say anything further to Jackson, who has consistently outmaneuvered him, Trewe is left with nothing other than that familiar refrain recited by Naipaul and his mimic-men:

You people create nothing. You imitate everything. It's all been done before, you see, Jackson....You can't ever be original, boy. That's the trouble with shadows, right? They can't think for themselves. (p. 156)

For his part, through his articulation of the Black Crusoe, Jackson relates his small servant existence to a larger struggle, as demonstrated by the very last line of the play: "Starting from Friday, Robinson, we could talk 'bout a raise?" As Patrick Taylor argues,

the multiplicity of meanings in this question, the double meanings of "Friday" and "raise," suggest not that Jackson is merely a servant asking for a salary increase, but that Friday, all Fridays, demand that their statuses be raised; they demand recognition.⁷⁹

Pantomime is a rather paradoxical work: a play about a play that never occurs; a play where the apparent superior is the subordinate and the subordinate superior. Starting from a Eurocentric theme, namely that of Robinson Crusoe, Walcott uses a subversive discourse of mimicry to appropriate the theme and recode it for use in a counter-hegemonic fashion. Going beyond a simple inversion of relations, Walcott's recoding and redefinition moves Friday out of the shadow of his master, offering him the opportunity to assert himself on his own terms. As such it offers us a useful strategy in rearticulating a new politics of postcolonial identity that transcends narrow essentialist divisions.

Coda—Living in the Void

“O my body, make of me always a man who questions!”

—Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

I thought of bringing this work to an end by means of this quote because of the unforgettable way in which it accentuates the sheer physicality of knowledge, the visceral unity of the body and the psyche. In saying this I am not referring to glib pseudo-spiritual pronouncements on the “mind-body connection.” With Fanon, the body is not only the Self but a transcendental entity, the embodiment of the social. Under capitalism/colonialism, the body of the subject has been torn asunder, violated:

On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood?⁸⁰

The hemorrhage is a violent erasure of one’s sense of place, one’s history, one’s sense of belonging. In its wake it leaves a physio-cognitive void, a felt lack, an estrangement:

It was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person....I existed triply: I occupied space. I moved toward the other . . . and

the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there,
disappeared.⁸¹

Similarly, this lack is felt in the collective consciousness of the colonized society. Specifically, as I have attempted to show in this work, this lack is manifest in the radical fracture and otherness of the Caribbean basin. The colonial amputation spattered the blood of the West Indies all over the world, sent it gushing through oceans, coursing through rivers—*mon sang minimisé, mon sang répandu*. What is left is a society of the void, the “nothing” to which Walcott referred. And, as Attali has noted: “living in the void means admitting the constant presence of the potential for revolution, music, and death.”⁸² We read these potentialities in the literature of the Caribbean, we hear them in its music, we see them in its sculpture, its painting, its dance. Admitting this constant presence of potentialities means being alert to the noises in the background, it means being able to decode the partial fragments of signals that compose the cultural networks of the meta-archipelago.

In these haunting noises of the meta-archipelago, we can detect the beginnings of a re/membering process, namely the development of what Wilson Harris has described as the “phantom limb.” Nathaniel Mackey describes this phantom limb as

a felt recovery, a felt advance beyond severance and limitation that contends with
and questions conventional reality, ... it is a feeling for what is not there that
reaches beyond as it calls into question what is.⁸³

This phantom limb denotes the beginnings of a collective “effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self,” the initial presencings of “the lasting tension of...freedom” that will enable people “to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world.”⁸⁴

It is what will re-establish the relations between formerly alienated/amputated peoples, enabling us “to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to ourselves.”85

Ultimately, it is what will heal the hemorrhage of the colonial body.

NOTES

- 1 Jerry Adler et al, "The Rap Attitude," *Newsweek*, vol. 115, no. 12 (March 19, 1990), p. 56
- 2 David Gates et al, "Decoding Rap Music," *Newsweek*, vol. 115, no. 12 (March 19, 1990), p. 60
- 3 Martha Bayles, *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music*. (New York: Free Press, 1994), p. 345.
- 4 quoted in Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), p. 52
- 5 B. Adler, in introduction to Janette Beckman, *Rap! Portraits and Lyrics of a Generation of Black Rockers*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. xv
- 6 Adler et al, op. cit., p. 56
- 7 Leonard Barrett, Sr., *The Rastafarians: Sounds of Cultural Dissonance*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977, 1988), p. 167
- 8 for a more detailed discussion of the Caribbean roots of hip-hop, see Dick Hebdige, *Cut 'n' Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music*, (London: Methuen and Co., 1987), chi. 16, and S. H. Fernando, Jr., *The New Beats: Exploring the Music, Culture, and Attitudes of Hip-Hop*, (New York: Anchor, 1994), chi. 2.
- 9 R. Radhakrishnan, "Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity," *Callaloo*, vol. 16, no. 4 (fall 1993), p. 755
- 10 Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean*. (New York: Vintage, 1984), p. 503.
- 11 Williams, op. cit., p. 503.
- 12 Frank Moya Pons, "Is There a Caribbean Consciousness?," *Americas* vol. 31, no. 8 (1970), p. 33.
- 13 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 218
- 14 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann. 1952. (New York: Grove, 1967), p. 116.

- 15 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 66.
- 16 Edouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais*. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981), p. 249.
- 17 Williams, op. cit., p. 503.
- 18 Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 2.
- 19 *ibid.*, pp. 3-4
- 20 Glissant, op. cit., p. 249.
- 21 Benitez-Rojo, op. cit., p. 11
- 22 Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 758
- 23 Glissant, op. cit., p. 30
- 24 *ibid.*, p. 29
- 25 *ibid.*, op. cit., p. 32
- 26 Fanon, op. cit., pp. 212-213.
- 27 V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage*, quoted in Michael V. Angrosino, "Identity and Escape in Caribbean Literature," in Phillip A. Dennis and Wendell Aycock, eds., *Literature and Anthropology*. (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1989), p. 113
- 28 Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature*. (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p. 54-55
- 29 Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 758.
- 30 Glissant, op. cit., p. 30.
- 31 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 60.
- 32 *ibid.*, p. 60.
- 33 Edward W. Said, "Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World," *Salmagundi*, no. 70-71, Spring-Summer 1986, p. 55.

34 Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 26-27.

35 Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan, "Acoustic Space," in *Explorations in Communication*, eds. Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 67.

36 Attali, op. cit., p. 7.

37 Glissant, op. cit., p. 238.

38 Bhabha, op. cit., p. 11.

39 Hall, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

40 Foucault, op. cit., p. 217.

41 Harlow, op. cit., p. 54.

42 Said, op. cit., p. 53.

43 Fanon, op. cit., p. 113.

44 *ibid.*, p. 115.

45 *ibid.*, p. 115.

46 Hall, op. cit., p. 95.

47 *ibid.*, p. 95.

48 Attali, op. cit., p. 33.

49 Fanon, op. cit., p. 7.

50 Nathaniel Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 19.

51 Benitez-Rojo, op. cit., p. 11.

52 *ibid.*, p. 18.

53 Williams, op. cit., pp. 501-502.

54 V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage*. (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 27. I personally find it interesting that it is Naipaul of all people, he who has consistently tried to escape the Caribbean, who would conveniently suggest that there is nothing there.

55 Derek Walcott, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, Robert D. Hamner, ed. (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1993), p. 53.

56 *ibid.*, p. 54.

57 Spivak, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

58 Bhabha, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

59 *ibid.*, p. 88.

60 Hebdige, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

61 *ibid.*, p. 14.

62 *ibid.*, p. 14.

63 Mackey, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

64 Keith Louis Walker, "Prolegomenes a une etude de la rhetoricalite cesairienne," *L'esprit createur*, vol. 32 no. 1 (spring 1992), p. 69.

65 Aimé Césaire, "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal." in *Aimé Césaire: The Collected Poetry*, bilingual edition, trans. with introduction and notes by Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Subsequent page references will be made within the text.

66 Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

67 documented in Lilyan Kesteloot, *Black Writers in French: A Literary History of Négritude*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy. (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1991), p. 159.

68 Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Le roman maghrebin*. (Rabat: SMER, 1979), p. 70, translated and quoted in Harlow, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

69 Lilyan Kesteloot, "Politique, poetique, et quete mystique dans la poesie d'Aimé Césaire," *L'esprit createur*, vol. 32. no. 1 (spring 1992), p. 8.

70 Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

- 71 Daniel M. Scott III, "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal: La poetique de la violence," *Romance Notes*, vol. 34, no. 2 (Winter 1993), p. 153.
- 72 Fanon, op. cit., p. 123.
- 73 Derek Walcott, *Pantomime*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1980). Subsequent references to the play will be made within the text.
- 74 Derek Walcott, "The Art of Poetry." Interview by Edward Hirsch, in Hamner, ed., op. cit., p. 74.
- 75 Attali, op. cit., p. 87.
- 76 Bhabha, op. cit., p. 99.
- 77 Patrick Taylor, "Myth and Reality in Caribbean Narrative: Derek Walcott's *Pantomime*," *World Literature Written in English*, vol. 26 no. 1 (1986), p. 170.
- 78 Taylor, op. cit., p. 174.
- 79 *ibid.*, p. 176.
- 80 Fanon, op. cit., p. 112.
- 81 *ibid.*, p. 112.
- 82 Attali, op. cit., p. 147.
- 83 Mackey, op. cit., p. 235.
- 84 Fanon, op. cit., p. 231.
- 85 *ibid.*, p. 231

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adler, B.. Introduction. *Rap! Portraits and Lyrics of a Generation of Black Rockers*. by Janette Beckman. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.

Adler, Jerry, et al. "The Rap Attitude." *Newsweek*, March 19, 1990: 56.

Angrosino, Michael V.. "Identity and Escape in Caribbean Literature." *Literature and Anthropology*. Ed. Phillip A. Dennis and Wendell Aycock. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1989.

Attali, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

Barrett, Leonard, Sr. *The Rastafarians: Sounds of Cultural Dissonance*. 1977. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988.

Bayles, Martha. *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music*. New York: Free Press, 1994.

Benitez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992.

Bhabha, Homi K.. *The Location of Culture*. New York and London: Routledge, 1994.

Carpenter, Edmund and Marshall McLuhan. "Acoustic Space." *Explorations in Communication*, Eds. Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan. Boston: Beacon Press, 1960.

Cesaire, Aime. "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal." *Aime Cesaire: The Collected Poetry*, bilingual edition. Trans. and eds. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. 1952. New York: Grove, 1967.

Fernando, S. H., Jr. *The New Beats: Exploring the Music, Culture, and Attitudes of Hip-Hop*. New York: Anchor, 1994.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1972.

Gates, David, et al. "Decoding Rap Music." *Newsweek*, March 19, 1990: p. 60.

Glissant, Edouard. *Le discours antillais*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981.

Hamner, Robert D., ed. *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*. Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1993.

Harlow, Barbara. *Resistance Literature*. New York and London: Methuen, 1987.

Hebdige, Dick. *Cut 'n' Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music*. London: Methuen and Co., 1987.

Kesteloot, Lilyan. *Black Writers in French: A Literary History of Negritude*. Trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1991.

_____. "Politique, poetique, et quete mystique dans la poesie d'Aime Cesaire." *L'esprit createur*. v. 32 n. 1 (Spring 1992): 8.

Khatibi, Abdelkebir. *Le roman maghrebin*. Rabat: SMER, 1979.

Mackey, Nathaniel. *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Naipaul, V. S.. *The Middle Passage*. New York: Macmillan, 1963.

Pons, Frank Moya. "Is There a Caribbean Consciousness?." *Americas* v. 31, n. 8 (1970): 33.

Radhakrishnan, R.. "Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity." *Callaloo* v. 16, n. 4 (Fall 1993): 755.

Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.

Edward W. Said, "Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World," *Salmagundi*. n. 70-71, (Spring-Summer 1986): 55.

Scott, Daniel M., III. "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal: La poetique de la violence." *Romance Notes*. v. 34 no. 2 (Winter 1993): 153.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993.

Taylor, Patrick. "Myth and Reality in Caribbean Narrative: Derek Walcott's Pantomime." *World Literature Written in English*. v. 26 n. 1 (1986): 170.

Walcott, Derek. "The Art of Poetry." Interview by Edward Hirsch. Hamner 65-83.

Walcott, Derek. "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" Hamner 51-57.

Walcott, Derek. *Pantomime*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1980.

Walker, Keith Louis. "Prolegomenes a une etude de la rhetoricalite cesairienne." *L'esprit createur*. v. 32 n. 1 (Spring 1992): 69.

Williams, Eric. *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean*. New York: Vintage, 1984.